Beliefs about Language Learning Revisited

How have students’ beliefs about language learning changed after participating in Erasmus exchange programmes?
Overview

- Research on beliefs
- Methodology
- The present pilot study
- Results

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Victory and Lockhart define beliefs as *assumptions* that students hold about:

- themselves as learners
- factors influencing learning
- the nature of language learning
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Individual differences of language learners

- personality
- ability/aptitude
- motivation
- learning styles
- language learning strategies
- other learner characteristics (anxiety, self-esteem, creativity, willingness to communicate and learner beliefs)
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BALLI
Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory
BALLI measures beliefs in five major areas:

- difficulty of language learning
- foreign language aptitude
- the nature of language learning
- learning and communication strategies
- motivation and expectations
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BALLI

different cultures  target languages  academic settings  learning stages
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beliefs

• motivation

• self-regulation

• strategy use
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logically-derived categories

empirically-derived categories
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- classroom observation
- interviews
- open-ended questionnaires
- videotapes of learners in class
- stimulated recall and follow-up interviews
- analysis of language learning diaries
- case studies
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- quantitative methods
- qualitative methods
- discourse analysis
- a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods
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Research questions
This research is part of a broader study on learner beliefs.

The immediate purpose

- To pilot –study the instrument for data collection and revise it
- To study which beliefs have changed after an Erasmus exchange program
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The Participants
12 students - 7 girls and 5 boys
Length of stay abroad – from 2 weeks to 5 months
Purpose of stay abroad
  write a Bachelor’s Thesis - 2 students
  study for a semester - 10 students
Working language – English (not the official language of the host country)
Level of English before the stay abroad – Intermediate to Upper-Intermediate
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The Instrument

• **3 sections** collecting data about
  
  • **Personal details** and **information about the Erasmus exchange program** such as length of stay, courses taken, assessment procedures; teacher assistance

• **beliefs about FL learning**

• **situations, tasks, people, reasons** that might have led to changes in beliefs
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The Instrument

- Combination of existing instruments (the Horwitz’s BALLI, S. Cotterall’s questionnaire)
- The items about beliefs about FL learning reflect
  - the role of the teacher
  - the role of feedback
  - the learner’s sense of self-efficacy
  - the use of strategies and the dimensions of the strategies-related behaviour
  - the nature of language learning
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The Instrument

- 68 items
- The items - grouped under 10 headings representing the different categories of beliefs
- Each heading with its corresponding items appears twice, for example

*I believed that the role of the teacher was to ...*

*I believe that the role of the teacher is to ....*

thus forming the two parts of the questionnaire
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before the stay abroad</th>
<th>After the stay abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I believed that the role of the teacher was to</td>
<td>I believe that the role of the teacher is to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tell me what to do</td>
<td>tell me what to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help me learn efficiently</td>
<td>help me learn efficiently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tell me what progress I am making</td>
<td>tell me what progress I am making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>say what my difficulties are</td>
<td>say what my difficulties are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>create opportunities for me to practice</td>
<td>create opportunities for me to practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decide how long I spend on activities</td>
<td>decide how long I spend on activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explain why we are doing an activity</td>
<td>explain why we are doing an activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>set my learning goals</td>
<td>set my learning goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>give me regular tests</td>
<td>give me regular tests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>offer help to me</td>
<td>offer help to me</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Data Collection and Analysis

- Respondents had to select as many items as they wanted from the two parts
- Marked items, reflecting learner preferences were counted and analyzed
- The questionnaires were sent by e-mail
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The Role of the Teacher

- To offer help: Before the stay abroad - 10, After the stay abroad - 10
- To tell what should be done: Before the stay abroad - 8, After the stay abroad - 8
- To give regular tests: Before the stay abroad - 6, After the stay abroad - 6
- To explain why an activity is done: Before the stay abroad - 5, After the stay abroad - 5
- To create opportunities for practice: Before the stay abroad - 6, After the stay abroad - 6
- To inform about progress: Before the stay abroad - 8, After the stay abroad - 8
- To help students learn efficiently: Before the stay abroad - 5, After the stay abroad - 5
- To set learning goals: Before the stay abroad - 4, After the stay abroad - 4
- To inform about difficulties: Before the stay abroad - 4, After the stay abroad - 4

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Teacher Expertise

- The teacher should be an expert in teaching languages
- The teacher should be an expert in learning languages
- The teacher should be an expert in showing students how to learn

Before the study abroad

After the study abroad
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Source of Feedback

- The teacher knows best how well I am learning
- I know best how well I am learning

Before the stay abroad
After the stay abroad
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Feedback on Language Learning

Before the stay abroad

After the stay abroad

The teacher helps me most
Other people help me most
I help myself most

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It is intimidating to be assessed by other people
It is useful to be assessed by other people

Attitude to Feedback

Before the stay abroad
After the stay abroad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before the stay abroad</th>
<th>After the stay abroad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is intimidating to be assessed by other people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is useful to be assessed by other people</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Strategy Use - I know how to...

- Identify strengths and...
- Ask for help
- Explain why I need English
- Plan my learning
- Measure my progress
- Find ways of practising
- Check work for mistakes
- Set my learning goals

Before the stay abroad
After the stay abroad
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Nature of Language Learning

- Making mistakes is a natural part of language learning
- Communication is possible without knowing the rules
- Rules are necessary for successful communication

Before the stay abroad
After the stay abroad
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Successful Language Learning depends on...

- Practice
- Opportunities to use the language
- The language teacher
- The learner's own effort
- Feedback

Before the study abroad
After the study abroad
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Individual FL Learning Success Depends on ...

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Conclusion

• Students
  • Greater autonomy
  • More responsibility

• Students and teachers
  • Awareness of language learning which led to clarification and better understanding.
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References

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Thank you for your attention